

# CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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**Statewide News Release** 

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# **Groups Receive Awards for Elder Abuse Prevention**

Three councils from eastern, southcentral and northern Kentucky receive funds to help efforts

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (June 30, 2016) – Three community groups have received awards from the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) to help their efforts to stop elder abuse.

At a conference focusing on elder abuse prevention earlier this month, CHFS presented three Public Awareness Initiative awards for \$500 each to the Kentucky River Council Against the Maltreatment of Elders (CAME), the Northern Kentucky Elder Maltreatment Alliance (EMA) and the Pulaski County Elder Abuse Council

The awards recognized the groups for showing a commitment to elder abuse prevention through public outreach in the past 12 months.

CHFS Deputy Secretary Judge Timothy Feeley said that local efforts like those of the winning councils are making a difference for Kentucky's senior citizens.

"Elder abuse and neglect has risen to such a level of concern that these councils have become crucial resources for local education and prevention," he said. "Through their resourcefulness and collaborations, their projects are teaching respect for elders and saving lives. I commend their community efforts over the past year."

The three award winners are part of the state's network of 24 Local Coordinating Councils on Elder Abuse (LCCEAs), which covers 93 counties. The councils provide focused education to their communities to protect the elder population from abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

CAME operates in Breathitt, Knott, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, Perry and Wolfe counties. In the past year, CAME has hosted a Senior Safety and Advocacy Day, sponsored a children's poster contest and launched its annual prevention campaign, which included newspaper and radio ads.

The council also held its second Regional Elder Abuse Awareness Day at the Hazard National Guard Armory in October. About 300 people attended, dressed in elder abuse prevention T-shirts. The event included



information booths, speakers and games for seniors – including a cake walk and "Plinko" game. Adult safety experts spoke to the group about signs of elder abuse, prevention and reporting.

Another popular project was "Blowing Bubbles for Elder Abuse." On May 4, the CAME council distributed small bottles of bubbles to elementary schools and senior centers in all eight counties. Students and seniors all blew bubbles to raise awareness of elder abuse prevention and encourage respect for elders.

EMA, serving Boone, Campbell, Gallatin, Kenton, Owen and Pendleton counties, has members that include health care providers, legal professionals, medical providers, veterans and other community advocates.

Insurance fraud and scams, reverse mortgage myths and helping the rural elderly with utility bills were some of the workshop topics EMA presented in the past year. The group sponsored its annual children's poster contest with the theme "Why I Love My Grandparents," and published winning entries in a calendar for awareness and fundraising.

EMA also provided organizations and citizens with informational fliers and training materials that teach about reporting procedures, types of abuse and how to avoid abuse.

In its nomination materials, the Pulaski County Elder Abuse Council called itself "small but mighty." Covering only Pulaski County, the group meets monthly to plan outreach efforts and events.

About 100 people attended its annual Elder Abuse Conference last August, which featured speakers on law enforcement, the legal system, hospice care, health care and the state's adult safety program.

The Pulaski council raised awareness and more than \$200 through its Pumpkins on Main decorating project last October. And it sponsored 12 needy elderly people with clothes and food from its Elderly Angel Tree project over the holidays.

The council also helped Somerset/Pulaski County earn the HeartSafe Community designation last year, an honor for communities that have met criteria to better respond to cardiac arrests. Council members promote heart health and educate about elder abuse prevention on visits to schools, businesses and health care and sports facilities.

CHFS gives administrative support to the LCCEAs, which provide elder abuse education and outreach at the local and regional levels depending on the needs of the communities. Kentucky's network involves local law enforcement, county officials, advocates, nursing homes, local businesses, social service agencies and individuals. They share a common goal of ending abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly in their communities by offering specific advocacy, outreach and prevention strategies.

Kentucky received more than 30,000 calls to report abuse, neglect and exploitation of people age 60 and older for state fiscal year 2015.

In Kentucky, reporting suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation is the law, and it's confidential. The toll-free reporting hotline is 1-877-KYSAFE1 (1-877-597-2331).

Kentuckians can help the fight against elder abuse by becoming involved with their LCCEAs. Membership is free and open to anyone interested in working to prevent elder abuse in his or her community.

To become involved with your community's LCCEA or to inquire about events, contact state LCCEA liaison Stacy Carey at 502-564-7043.

Get more information about the councils and recognizing the signs of elder abuse online at chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/eaa/.

### Recognize the Signs of Elder Abuse

If you believe an elderly person is being abused, neglected or exploited, call 1-877-KYSAFE1 (1-877-597-2331), the state's abuse hotline. If you believe there is imminent risk, immediately call 911 or local law enforcement.

Learn to recognize the following signs of neglect and abuse.

#### Neglect

- Obvious malnutrition, dehydration
- Dirty and uncombed hair; dirty and torn or climate-inappropriate clothes; or offensive body odor
- Hoarding
- Lack of glasses, dentures or hearing aid, or lack of medical care
- Bedsores
- Recent suffering or loss of spouse, family members or close friends

#### **Physical Abuse**

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, burns, broken bones; explanation of the injury seems unrealistic
- Multiple bruises in various stages of healing, particularly bruises on inner arms or thighs
- Experiences pain when touched
- Loss of bowel and bladder control
- Never leaves the house or allows visitors
- Never mentions family or friends

#### **Sexual Abuse**

- Evidence of sexually transmitted disease
- Irritation or injuries to the mouth, genitals or anus
- Upset when changed or bathed
- Fearful of a particular person
- Loss of bowel and bladder control

## **Emotional/Psychological Abuse**

- Isolated from family and friends
- Sudden dramatic change in behavior, appearing withdrawn, depressed, hesitant to talk openly
- Caregiver won't let victim speak for herself or himself
- Caregiver scolds, insults, threatens victim
- Trembling, clinging

#### **Financial Abuse**

- Unusual activity in bank account; sudden large withdrawals, expenditures that are not consistent with past financial history
- Use of automated teller machines (ATM) when the person has no history of using ATMs or cannot walk
- A recent will, when the person seems incapable of writing a will
- Rights signed away on legal papers without understanding what the papers mean
- Unpaid bills, such as house payment, rent, taxes or utilities

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.